

House Subcommittee Passes Melancon Amendment

May 19, 2010

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today, an amendment offered by U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) to provide safe drinking water to more rural and disadvantaged communities moved forward in the House of Representatives. The amendment was added to a key infrastructure bill during a mark-up held by the Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Environment, on which Congressman Melancon serves.

In introducing the amendment, Congressman Melancon said. **“[P]roviding safe drinking water is not a public service on which I’m willing to compromise. I believe these amendments will be one more step toward helping these communities in need secure the funds necessary to build out these improvements.”**

Congressman Melancon continued, **“Because these [rural and disadvantaged] communities are often in the direst need and have the least means to improve their water systems, we must make special care to recognize their hardship. My proposal is modest in nature, but signals to these communities that we believe they deserve clean, safe water, like everyone else.”**

The Melancon amendment was added to H.R. 5320, the “Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act of 2010” (“AQUA”), legislation to reauthorize and increase funding for the drinking water state revolving fund (SRF) under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The fund helps communities finance infrastructure improvements to their drinking water systems, with an emphasis on assisting small and disadvantaged communities.

The Melancon amendment would increase the percentage of funding from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that is dedicated to rural and disadvantaged communities. The amendment would also double the amount of federal funding that states can use from their administrative accounts to offer technical assistance to water systems, potentially saving each community thousands of dollars.

The Melancon amendment was strongly supported by the Louisiana Rural Water Association. The National Rural Water Association also endorsed the amendment, commenting, **“On behalf of small and rural communities in Louisiana and the other states, I am writing in support of the Melancon Amendment to the ‘Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act of 2010.’ The amendment would increase the amount of federal funding targeted to the communities most in need of financial assistance to comply with federal standards based on economic and public health need.”**

“Thank you, Representative Melancon, for the additional assistance to rural and small communities and we urge passage of your amendment.”

[Click here](#) to view Congressman Melancon’s amendment.

During the committee mark-up today, Congressman Melancon gave the following statement in

support of his amendment.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I appreciate you holding this markup today and bringing this important legislation to the committee for consideration.

I have an amendment before the committee that would make just a few small changes to the bill that would mean a lot to the rural and disadvantaged communities in Louisiana and around the country.

Unfortunately, infrastructure around the country is in serious need of maintenance, repair and in many cases replacement.

And providing safe drinking water is not a public service on which I'm willing to compromise. I believe these amendments will be one more step toward helping these communities in need secure the funds necessary to build out these improvements.

The first part of my amendment would increase the set-aside for disadvantaged communities from 4% to 6% of the available state funds.

Because these communities are often in the direst need and have the least means to improve their water systems we must make special care to recognize their hardship. My proposal is modest in nature, but signals to these communities that we believe they deserve clean, safe water, like everyone else.

The second part of my amendment would simply change the amount of funds that a state may use out of its administrative monies to offer technical assistance to water systems. The states would be able to use 4% rather than 2% to provide this important help to water systems.

Often times, there are simple solutions and improvements that can be made to a system that will yield great improvements to the community served.

But without adequate technical assistance we may lose out on these simple efficiencies and improvements. My amendment would give more flexibility to states to make sure we can take advantage of these low-cost but high gain opportunities.

I am proud to say that the National Rural Water Association supports this amendment, but I'm even more proud to say that the Louisiana Rural Water Association supports this amendment.

In LA 1,015 of the total 1,085 community water supplies serve populations less than 10,000. These communities will no doubt benefit from more attention and assistance through this legislation.

I thank the chairman for the opportunity to offer this amendment and I urge support from my fellow committee members.

###